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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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Zonta International, an organization of executive professionals whose objectives include improving the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of woman supports the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

In paragraph 93, the Platform for Action emphasizes that conditions that subject girls to harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, pose grave health risks. Further, in paragraph 112, it defines violence against women, a primary focus of Zonta International efforts, as encompassing female genital mutilation.

In strategic objective C.2. "Strengthen preventative programmes that promote women's health", non-governmental organizations are encouraged to take action by "placing special focus on programmes for both men and women that emphasize the elimination of harmful attitudes and practices, including female genital mutilation ...".

Recognizing women's health to be one of the areas of critical concern to be addressed by this session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Zonta International would like to report the following:

* E/CN.6/1999/1.

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(a) We are engaging in a partnership with the United States Committee for UNICEF to support community-based programmes in seven provinces of Burkina Faso where female genital mutilation is most prevalent. The objective of this project is to reduce the prevalence of female genital mutilation by 50 per cent in the period 1998–2002;

(b) These initiatives will focus on the training of both women and men whose task will be to raise the awareness of the populations on the adverse effects and risks associated with the practice of female genital mutilation;

(c) Training will also be undertaken with youth leaders, religious leaders, press workers, village administrative officials, teachers, law enforcement officials, village health workers and circumcisers;

(d) The project will also aim to promote the law against female circumcision, including translating the law into local languages and disseminating it;

(e) Advocacy initiatives with the various ministries of education and health to include information on the fight against the practice of female genital mutilation in school curricula will also be undertaken.